

Christopher rocks with NNLC

By Cindi Ainsworth, research and marketing specialist, NNLC, marketing@nnlc.org, 775/356-1007

Success Story

Feeling stuck in a dead-end job because he lacked a High School Diploma, Christopher Morales knew he had to change his life, but he did not know where to turn. He acknowledged that he usually felt "too lazy to go back to school" but he realized he needed to do something differently.

He took his first step to his future by enrolling at the Northern Nevada Literacy Council (<http://nnlc.org/>). After a short time at the Reno community-based organization, he realized that postsecondary education was the key to improving his life and began focusing on preparing to take the GED® Tests. The personalized support he received from NNLC's staff and instructors enabled him to focus on weak skill areas, such as computer work and math.



Christopher ruefully admitted, "I just didn't study in high school." He credits his NNLC instructors as the chief motivators in helping him improve his study habits because they really listened and cared. His successful classroom experience gave him the confidence to set even higher future goals. "My need for higher education has grown by leaps and bounds!" he said. After he receives his GED, he plans on enrolling in the vocational veterinary technician classes at Truckee Meadows Community College. He even mentioned that he would like to continue studying at UNR!

As an added bonus, Christopher completed the first session and is currently enrolled in the second session of NNLC's new Plug-Into-Choices, a career pathways program that will help him improve his math, writing, and reading skills and connect him to career opportunities in high-demand occupations.

Like Christopher, many turn to NNLC to enhance the basic skills needed by today's workforce or to bridge the remedial education gap many face in order to move on to postsecondary instruction or vocational training.

Students don't want just a job, but a career where they can support their families. Many students comment that their success with NNLC classes made them believe in themselves, which in turn gave them the assurance to continue on with their education after receiving a GED. The extra support from NNLC's staff focuses the student and gives them the boost they need to advance to the next step on their career ladder.

"To anybody in my shoes, I would heartedly encourage them to participate in the programs that NNLC has to offer — you would be a fool not to take advantage of them," said Christopher. "I know that because I was once that fool. NNLC rocks and I really appreciate everything they have done and are doing for my education and my self-worth!"

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**The great thing in this world
is not so much where we
stand, as in what direction
we are moving.**

—**Oliver Wendell Holmes**



Wisdom in numbers

The Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) released two informative reports in September:

ROI from Investing in Workforce Development (www.caalusa.org/WorkforceROI.pdf) is a four-page policy brief prepared by Andrew Sum, a member of the CAAL board and Director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University. It summarizes the key return-on-investment findings since the 1990s on the effectiveness of workforce development programs for low-income adults and dislocated workers in the U.S.

Facing the Challenge of Numeracy in Adult Education (www.caalusa.org/NumeracyChallenge.pdf) is the final report on CAAL's two-year Adult Numeracy project. The report discusses the case for shifting from the current emphasis on traditional math instruction in adult education to instruction in a more comprehensive set of numeracy skills. It urges action in a number of areas as well as a good deal of further discussion. One major area of focus is the articulation issue between ABE preparation for the GED and between the GED and college placement tests based on COMPASS. Another is the paucity of math instruction for adult ESL students with low levels of prior education. The report suggests ways to reform math in adult education in such areas as curriculum design, assessment, and teacher training and recruitment. A companion publication, *Adult Numeracy: A Reader*, was published in July.

These and other reports are available from the publication page of the CAAL website (<http://caalusa.org/>).

CAAL is a national public charity dedicated to developing adult education, ESL, and workforce skills in America. CAAL operates a varied program of cutting-edge research, policy and issue analysis, symposia, planning, and leadership development activities.

Measures of Effective Teaching

In fall 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project to test new approaches to recognizing effective teaching. The project's goal is to help build fair and reliable systems for teacher observation and feedback in order to help teachers improve and administrators make better personnel decisions. Researchers from academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and several private firms are collecting and analyzing data from seven urban school districts.

Although the project is ongoing (the final report will not be released until winter 2011–12), findings are reported as they become available.

Researchers studied student perception data and student achievement gains on state and supplemental tests in grades 4 through 8 for five MET districts. According to their report:

- In every grade and subject studied, a teacher's past success in raising student achievement on state tests (that is, his or her value-added) is one of the strongest predictors of his or her ability to do so again.
- The teachers with the highest value-added scores on state tests also tend to help students

understand math concepts or demonstrate reading comprehension through writing.

- The average student knows effective teaching when he or she experiences it.
- Valid feedback need not be limited to test scores alone. By combining different sources of data, it is possible to provide diagnostic, targeted feedback to teachers who are eager to improve.

Researchers found the two types of evidence — student achievement gains and student feedback — are positively correlated, with teachers performing better on one measure tending to perform better on the other measures. "In other words, it is possible to combine in a coherent package a teacher's student achievement results with feedback on specific strengths and weaknesses in their practice," they wrote. Other measures — such as classroom observations and new teacher assessments — are being studied.

Download the Preliminary Findings Policy Brief and Research Report from <http://www.metproject.org/>

Get NRS facts — fast

The *NRS FastFacts* present various statistics about adult education at the national level, including state highlights, as well. These concise reports at www.nrsweb.org/reports/fast_facts.aspx focus on the current state of adult education and summarize trends and characteristics from 2004–2009 for the least-literate participants in Adult Basic Education Beginning Literacy Programs, English Literacy participants in Adult Education, and Adult Education personnel and volunteers.

College-bound

- GoToCollegeNevada.org is a Web site for students, parents, and educators. It provides resources and information to help students prepare for postsecondary education, encouraging them to “take the pledge to go to college.” Funded by the Department of Education, the site is produced by the Nevada P-16 Advisory Council and the Nevada System of Higher Education.
- The report *Integrating Curriculum: Lessons for Adult Education from Career and Technical Education* (<http://nvae.us/4a>) describes and examines integrated curriculum as a strategy that has been implemented in career and technical education (CTE) programs in high schools. The strategy holds promise for preparing students for career advancement and training or postsecondary education.



ProLiteracy launches EdNet

ProLiteracy recently announced the launch of [ProLiteracy Education Network](http://ProLiteracyEdNet.org) (EdNet), a new adult literacy site that contains most of the online courses and other high quality resources that tutors, teachers, staff, and students have found helpful through the Thinkfinity Literacy Network. EdNet enables ProLiteracy to add many new adult literacy resources in response to requests from users.

Visit ProLiteracyEdNet.org to access:

- reading, comprehension, and vocabulary activities for use by students,
- many self-paced, free, online professional development courses for adult educators,
- three courses that explain the type of literacy-for-social-change work being done by ProLiteracy partners around the world, and
- three courses on the collection, analysis, and use of data that were developed as part of the performance accountability project, a collaboration of ProLiteracy and the Dollar General Literacy Foundation.

Thinkfinity Literacy Network (<http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/TLN/>) will now concentrate on serving people who work with children and youth in K-12.

YouTube targets teachers

Educators who have been wanting to use YouTube videos in class can now find an easy way in! YouTube recently launched its own teacher's channel, YouTube.com/Teachers, a guide to using videos in class.

Teachers can follow tips that show everything from organizing videos to sparking lively discussions to help struggling students. They can also sign up to become part of the YouTube Teachers Community, a mailing list that allows them to share ideas and best practices.

The new teachers site is part one of two big initiatives geared towards educators. YouTube plans an announcement soon about huge changes that will address many of the concerns teachers have had about using YouTube videos.

Stay tuned at <http://bit.ly/oG1X2q>. In the meantime, check out existing videos and resources at www.youtube.com/teachers.

Poet Laureate lauds social media

Thanks to Dawnne Ernette for forwarding this interesting take on Twitter, texting, and literacy!

According to British Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, children who use social networking sites and text messaging to communicate are perfecting their poetry skills.

Duffy, a popular professor at England's Manchester Metropolitan University, said poetry was the original form of text messaging and that communicating via mobile phones and through social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, helped teenagers condense their thoughts.

—[The Telegraph \(UK newspaper\)](http://TheTelegraph.com), 9/8/11

This professional development project is a leadership activity funded by a grant from the Nevada State Department of Education, Workforce Investment Act, Title II (Adult Education and Family Literacy). There is no discrimination or denial of participation on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion or religious creed, national origin, sexual orientation, ancestry, or disability.

November gatherings

In the northeast ...

The National College Transition Network at World Education, Inc. presents its fifth annual national conference on Effective Transitions in Adult Education November 14-15 in Providence, RI. There are four concurrent pre-conference sessions on November 13.

Workshops cover promising practices for career pathways and ESOL/ESL programs, preparing students for college courses, building student self-efficacy, and more!

Keynote speakers include Dr. Brenda Dann-Messler, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education; Jennifer Hahn, an expert on messaging and advocacy for adult education and community colleges; and Deejo Jibril, an ESOL and Bridge to College student currently finishing her undergraduate degree.

Info at www.collegetransition.org.

... and closer to home

Truckee Meadows Community College is hosting a CATESOL Conference, "Empowering Educators through Cultural competency," for northern Nevadans November 18-19 in Reno. Contact Tünde Csepelyi (tcsepelyi@tmcc.edu, 775/829-9052) for details.

Save the date!

MPAEA's 70th Annual Conference is set for April 11-14, 2012 in Helena, MT. The event will focus on implementing career pathways in adult education.



The Mountain Plains Adult Education Association is one of the oldest regional adult education organizations in the United States, serving Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as Nevada.

The Association has grown from the vision of a few hard-working pioneers to become a creative and effective force in the field of adult and continuing education.

Brad Deeds, Nevada's Adult Education Director, currently serves as MPAEA President. Also serving on the Board are Gordon Harmes (Clark County Adult Education) and Kathleen Jameson (Lyon County Adult High School Programs).

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